



SUSPICIOUS LETTER, PACKAGE, OR UNIDENTIFIED SUBSTANCE (NON-EXPLOSIVE)

Directive: 13 – 110

Date of Issue: July 2013 Amends/Cancels: G.O. 12-18

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Directive is to establish guidelines for a Department of General Services Maryland Capitol Police (DGS-MCP) response to a suspicious letter, package or unidentified substance.

II. POLICY

All DGS-MCP employees will strictly adhere to the procedures set forth in this Directive.

III. BACKGROUND

Many facilities in communities around Maryland have received suspicious letters, or packages. Most were empty envelopes; some have had talcum powder in them. **None have had anthrax.** Most frequently have been sent to schools, government buildings and family planning facilities. The purpose of this order is to recommend procedures for handling such incidents.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Police Communications

Initial complaints of a suspicious letter or package will more than likely go directly to Police Communications.

1. The Police Communication Operator (PCO) will advise the caller to:

- a. Not touch the powdery substance or open package/envelope
- b. Keep others away from area
- c. Do not move letter, package
- d. Turn off any office fans or heaters
- e. Wash hands with soap and water
- f. Leave the immediate area. Those possibly exposed should relocate to an isolated/contained area.

2. The PCO should ask the following question.
 - a. Do you know who the letter is from?
 - b. Have you had threats from anyone?
 - c. Do you see anything inside or outside the envelope – (i.e. Powder or wires)?
 - d. Is anyone experiencing any medical problems?
3. Dispatch police officer to investigate complaint.
4. **The PCO will notify 911 of suspicious letter/ package or incident.**
5. The Police Communications Operator should be able to provide the following information to 911.
 - a. Location of the building
 - b. Location of the package within the building
 - c. What makes package suspicious
6. Ensure both *law enforcement* and *fire department* personnel from allied agencies are notified.

B. Responding Officer

1. Make sure 911 has been activated.
2. Only one officer should enter area.
3. Put on mask and gloves prior to entering effected area.
4. Do not open the package or letter.
5. Do not shake or empty the contents.
6. Put the package down gently in the safest place available **without** transporting the package out of the already affected area.
7. Handle event using established situational guideline set forth in section (C,D,E).
8. ***Do not carry the package or envelope, show it to others, or allow others to examine it.***
9. Do not share or in any way try to remove the contents.
10. Do not attempt to pick up, or sweep up any spillage.
11. Put the package or envelopes on a stable surface; do not sniff, touch, taste, or look closely at it or any of the contents that may be spilled.
12. Do not touch your eyes, nose or any other body parts.
13. Have FOM shut off Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning (HVAC) Systems.
14. Turn off personal fans and any equipment that might have a fan (computers, printers, servers, etc.).
15. Isolate the package and close off the room by shutting all doors and windows.
16. Advise fellow co-workers to avoid the area.
17. Keep all potential exposed individuals in close proximity, but out of high-hazard area.
18. Don't leave the area until told to do so by Fire Department Haz-Mat Teams.

19. Ensure all personnel who have touched the package/letter wash their hands with soap and water.
20. List all persons who have touched the package/letter.
21. Remove protective equipment once you leave the affected area and place in a storage bag for disposal.

C. Unopened Letter or Letter That Appears Empty

1. Do not shake or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
2. Place the envelope in a plastic zip lock bag or other type of clear container to prevent leakage of contents. The zip lock bag or clear container should then be placed *inside a second* zip lock bag or container.
3. If you do not have a bag or container, cover the envelope or package with a trashcan.
4. Wash hands with soap and water to prevent the spread of contaminants to the face.
5. Develop a list of anyone who was in the room or area when the suspicious letter or package was discovered.

D. Actions to Be Taken for an Opened Suspicious Letter or Package and Material has Spilled

1. Do not try to clean up the powder. Carefully cover the spilled contents immediately with a trashcan. Try to avoid creating air currents which may cause the substance to become airborne. Do not remove the cover.
2. Leave the room, close the door or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
3. Wash hands with soap and water to prevent the spread of contaminants to the face.
4. If advised by the Fire Department remove heavily contaminated clothing as soon as possible and place in a plastic bag or some other container that can be sealed. This clothing bag should be given to the fire department for proper handling. The fire department will provide means of decontamination.
5. Shower with soap and water as soon as possible. Do not use bleach or disinfectant. If the situation warrants it, the fire department will provide means for decontamination.

E. Aerosolization

1. Turn off local fans.
2. Leave the area immediately.
3. Close the door or section off the area to prevent others from entering.
4. Have FOM shut down the air handling system in the building.

F. Supervisor Responsibility

1. Notify Detachment Commander
2. Notify Chief of Police or his designee.
3. Notify Superintendent of Facilities, Operations and Maintenance (FOM)
4. Ensure 911 has been activated.
5. Meet Fire Department Emergency Response Team at incident location (FDERT).
6. Ascertain if FDERT has notified additional
 - a. Local Law Enforcement
 - b. Local Health Department
 - c. Maryland Department of the Environment
7. Assign a Patrol Officer to the comprehensive primary investigation.
8. Ensure additional Law Enforcement and Security Services are provided.
 - a. Traffic Control
 - b. Scene Security

G. Fire Department Responsibilities

1. The fire department should dispatch a Hazmat Team. If a local Hazmat Team is not available, fire communications should request assistance from the Maryland Department of the Environment.
2. Local health Department officials should also be notified.
3. The Hazmat Team will screen the letter, package or spilled contents for chemicals and radiation.
4. The Hazmat Team will ensure that the occupants of the affected area are identified.
5. If self decon has not been performed and is necessary, the Hazmat Team will commence decon operations and collection of potentially contaminated clothing. The Hazmat Team will provide decontaminated individuals with disposable clothing.
6. Potentially exposed personnel will be evaluated by a medic unit after decontamination for baseline patient assessment and documentation.
7. For cases where no credible threat is determined, those persons potentially exposed should be advised to seek medical attention if they start to develop flu-like symptoms.

H. Local Health Department Responsibilities

1. The local Health Department (LHD) will be notified of incidents immediately, or as soon as possible, in order to have necessary input into the evaluation of the incident. The Fire Department traditionally notifies the LHD however assumptions should not be made.
2. The local Health Department (LHD) will assist in the evaluation of the event. Local Health Department personnel will assist in making determination regarding the exposure credibility of the event.
3. Determination of exposure credibility will assist in formulating recommendations for response plan and laboratory testing.
4. Samples referred to the state lab for testing will not be accepted unless the LHD is involved and part of the assessment process.

5. Contact numbers

- a. Anne Arundel County
General Number 410-222-7095
Emergency Preparedness 410-222-4114
- b. Baltimore City
General Number 410-396-3100
311
Emergency Preparedness 443-984-2622

I. DHMH Laboratories

- 1. In order to respond to threats of unidentified substances, the Laboratories Administration has developed a network of personnel who have the knowledge and equipment to effectively handle samples submitted for biological, chemical, and radiological testing. These labs have the capability of testing for agents such as anthrax, tularemia, ricin, botulinum toxin, cyanide, trace metals, and different categories of pesticides. Samples can vary from white powders, environmental samples, various foodstuffs, or clinical specimens.
- 2. DHMH Laboratories Administration Procedures
 - a. Law enforcement should determine the seriousness and credibility of the threat and, along with local public health officials, the potential for credible exposure. If law enforcement determines there is both a credible threat and a credible exposure exist then the 24/7 On Call Contact Person for the Laboratories Administration should be called.
 - b. The Laboratory Emergency Preparedness and Response 24/7 On Call Contact Person will obtain basic contact information to include: caller, agency, and contact phone number.
 - c. The Laboratories Administration division chief (or their designee) will then contact the Laboratory Emergency Preparedness and Response 24/7 On Call Contact Person and inform him of the results of their call.
 - d. If there is both a credible threat and exposure, then Laboratories Administration personnel will arrange to meet Law Enforcement at the Central Laboratory outside of normal business hours. Samples associated with a credible threat and/or exposure must be sent under the chain of custody procedures and therefore should not be entrusted to a courier. If there is not a specific credible threat and/or exposure, and testing is still requested, then the sample should be stored according to the local protocol developed by local law enforcement and LHD and arrangements made to deliver the sample the next business day.
 - e. All samples should be screened by local Hazmat teams for chemicals, radiation, and explosives before they are submitted to the DHMH laboratories for testing.
 - f. Samples must be smaller than 18" x 24".
 - g. The sample(s) should be taken to the Central Laboratory as soon as Hazmat has screened the sample(s) for chemicals, radiation, and explosives.

- h. In general, powder samples received by the Laboratories Administration are tested first for other biological and chemical agents.
- i. If other biologic and chemical agents are suspected, requests must be communicated to the Laboratory Emergency Preparedness and Response 24/7 On Call Contact Person.
- j. When each unit has completed their testing of the sample (i.e., anthrax ricin, chemistry), they will phone the Laboratory Emergency Preparedness and Response 24/7 On Call Contact Person (using the same contact numbers as above).

3. Office of Laboratory Emergency Preparedness and Response Contact Numbers

Main Number: 410-767-6096

Emergency Contacts – Emergency Preparedness (unidentified substance.)

Monday through Friday 8:00am – 4:30pm (Dial in Order)

- Office Phone: 410-767-6096
- Blackberry: 410-925-3121
- Office Phone 410-767-6082
- Pager 410-408-7521

After Hours (Dial in Order)

- Blackberry: 410-925-3121
- Pager: 410-408-7521

J. Field Test of Unidentified Substance

1. DHMH will not accept any unidentified substance without it first being filed tested.
2. Upon arrival the local Fire Department will field test the unidentified substance for harmful chemicals, compounds, and radiation.
3. No credible threat:

If the Fire Department Hazmat Team determine the unidentified substance poses no credible threat the following procedures will be initiated.

- a. the remaining substance will be double bagged for transport to the DHMH Laboratory Administrations.
- b. a chain of custody form will be generated by the transporting officer.
- c. the transporting officer will contact DHMH @ 410-767-6096 ***before*** transporting the unidentified substance to the laboratory administration.
- d. the transporting officer will complete all required DHMH paperwork upon arrival.

4. Credible threat:

If the Fire Department Hazmat Team determine there is a credible threat based on the circumstances of the incident and on-scene characterization of the substance the following procedures will be initiated.

- a. the Department of the environment (MDE) will be notified 866-633-4686
- b. MDE will transport the material to DHMH.
- c. a criminal investigation will be initiated.

K. Criminal Investigation

1. If unidentified substance is deemed credible and ***was*** sent through the U.S. Mail the following Federal Agencies need to be notified.

- a. United States Postal Inspection Service 1-877-876-2455
- b. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baltimore 410-265-8080

2. Allied Law Enforcement

If unidentified substance is deemed credible and ***was not*** sent through the U.S. Mail a cooperative investigation will be initiated with the following:

Annapolis Detachment
Maryland State Police
Glen Burnie Barrack "P"
410-761-5130

Baltimore Detachment
Baltimore Police Department
CID 410-396-2691
410-396-2571

L. Anthrax

There are many misconceptions regarding anthrax. The following factual information should be factored in when responding to suspicious white powder incidents.

1. Anthrax organisms can cause skin infection, gastrointestinal infection or pulmonary infection. To do so the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. It does not leap into one's body. All forms of disease are generally treatable with antibiotics.
2. For anthrax to be effective as a covert agent it must be aerosolized into particles between 0.4 and 2/10,000ths of an inch smaller than a red blood cell. This is difficult to do, and requires a great deal of technical skill and special equipment.
3. If these small particles are inhaled, life-threatening lung infection can occur, but prompt recognition and treatment are effective.

4. Anthrax cannot be aerosolized out of an envelope or package containing powder. The same facts conditions are generally true for other bacteria likely to be considered as biological weapons.
5. Biological agents can cause infection in the skin, gastrointestinal system, or the lungs. In order for this to occur, the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed or inhaled as a fine aerosolized mist. Disease can be prevented after exposure to the anthrax spores with the appropriate antibiotics. Anthrax is not spread from one person to another.